

Similarly, in 1997, general director Mark Weinstein sought, through financial management and long-range strategic planning, to ensure a sound future for the Pittsburgh Opera, increasing the company's assets and establishing a gold standard for financial management in the industry. This planning, as well as the establishment of the Artistic Excellence Project to raise funds for engaging elite singers and directors, has ensured that the Pittsburgh Opera will continue to serve as a cultural centerpiece of Pittsburgh and a respected leader in the greater opera community.

Again, I want to congratulate the Pittsburgh Opera on the impressive achievement of their 75th anniversary. I wish them the best and look forward to their continued enrichment of the arts community both in Pittsburgh and nationwide.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, today I wish to recognize the Pittsburgh Opera, the seventh oldest opera company in the United States. The Pittsburgh Opera is currently engaged in its 75th season, and I would like to congratulate them on this momentous anniversary. The company started in 1939 when five ambitious women were determined to bring opera to their community. Within a year, these women had assembled musicians, singers, sets, costumes, and lighting, and produced the opera company's first performance, Offenbach's "The Tales of Hoffman" at Carnegie Music Hall. Before long, the Pittsburgh Opera Society, under the leadership of general director Dr. Richard Karp, had become a fully professional organization.

The Pittsburgh Opera is not only recognized as an asset to southwestern Pennsylvania, but it is known throughout the international opera community for the fine skill and artistry of its productions. It has welcomed numerous celebrity vocalists over the years, and the company's notoriety only continues to grow and attract more talent. I believe that the Pittsburgh Opera has been undeniably successful in fulfilling its stated mission "to culturally enrich Pittsburgh and the tri-state area, and to draw national and international attention to the region," and I think that the 31,000 Pittsburghers and visitors who attend the opera's productions annually would agree.

The Pittsburgh Opera is also dedicated to fostering the development of future opera talent. The company has established and nurtured a resident artist program that ranks among the top five in the country and has the distinction of being the only program in the United States that trains singers as well as stage directors. These artists present two fully staged productions of their own and also develop a variety of general music programs to perform at public schools, community centers, and libraries.

Six years ago, after nearly 70 years without its own center, the Pittsburgh Opera acquired and renovated the

original home of the George A. Westinghouse Air Brake Co. in Pittsburgh's historic Strip District and transformed it into a state-of-the-art home for the development and production of opera. This structure is the oldest LEED-certified building in Pittsburgh, and it is a fitting home for an opera company with such a rich history and a promising future.

Again, I want to recognize the Pittsburgh Opera on its 75th anniversary. I wish them nothing but success in the next 75 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FREEMASONS CONFERENCE

• Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, today I wish to join grand master Gerald E. Piepiora and the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Maryland in welcoming the 2014 Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America, which will be convening in Baltimore from Sunday, February 15, to Tuesday, February 18. This annual meeting is the largest gathering of grand masters in the world and the first time they have come to Baltimore. This delegation of grand masters represents 2 million Freemasons from all 50 States; Washington, DC; Puerto Rico; the Provinces of Canada; and the United Mexican States. In addition, a delegation of grand masters representing Freemasons from around the world also will be attending the conference.

Throughout their history, Freemasons—the oldest and largest fraternity in the world—have dedicated their lives to cultivating good moral character both within themselves and in their communities. The Masonic fraternity is dedicated to caring for those less fortunate and to giving back to the community, contributing well over three quarters of a billion dollars annually to philanthropic causes in North America alone.

Maryland Masons have carried on this tradition since 1787 by serving their communities with local scholarship programs, student assistance, volunteerism, educational support, and other charitable activities. Maryland Masons make important contributions to the quality of life of Marylanders at every stage of life, including the Maryland Child Identification Program that provides free identification and protection against the problem of missing children; free childhood language disorder clinics; transportation to regional Shriners Hospitals for children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate; and retirement housing and continuing care for Masons and their families.

I urge my colleagues to join me in welcoming this distinguished group of international guests to Maryland and in wishing the masons of Maryland continued success in their pursuit of

fraternity, brotherly love, relief, and truth.●

REMEMBERING WALTER J. "JIMMIE" FEW

• Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we often note in our record the passing of government and business leaders of renown, and that is appropriate. But it is also fitting to pause to reflect on some of those millions of American citizens who reflect in their lives the highest and best ideals of their faith and of America.

Jimmie Few of Mobile, AL, was one such person. I first got to know him when, in 1991, we took part in a mission to Russia as part of a United Methodist Church delegation. This was shortly after the fall of communism. We spent over a week in the small city of Vyksa, 5 hours east of Moscow. We roomed together in the home of a Russian family. This was the first chance the people of Vyksa had to actually meet and get to know Americans. Frequently, one of the Russians would, with surprise, say, "You look just like us!"

Jimmie was a very large man and naturally took charge. When an agreement was concluded, Jimmie would seal it with a firm—very firm—handshake. He loved the Russians. Indeed, after this he made some 19 more trips, assisting with orphanages, schools, and Bible schools as well as advising Russians on economic matters. Jimmie was a very experienced small businessman. He bought an orphanage a needed van on one occasion and fixed a road to the orphanage in another.

This kind of humanitarian, religious mission is not unusual for Americans. Thousands of such trips are occurring now involving hundreds of thousands of Americans who make trips to meet with millions around the globe. They don't focus on the rich and powerful; they focus on those in need, the poor and the children. No nation in the history of the world has ever matched such selfless giving. It reflects well on the United States, surely creating greater understanding among peoples, and it is in harmony, certainly, with the spirit of Jesus, which has inspired so many.

While Jimmy's business success and health suffered in recent years, his good life of service to his Lord and to others exemplifies the best in humanity.●

REMEMBERING COLONEL WILLIAM EDWARD CALLENDER, SR.

• Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, today, I would like to pay tribute to COL William Edward "Bill" Callender, Sr., U.S. Army, Retired. Bill was a friend, a national hero proven in combat, a man who loved his family, and a man who committed himself to service to others. To an exceptional degree, he loved his country and most especially, he loved and honored those who served her in uniform.